Writing for the world
Wikipedia assignment

Part I due September 21st
Part II due October 19th

Part III due November 23rd

Danny Heap

In this assignment you will plan, prepare, and submit a modest contribution to Wikipedia. Wikipedia depends on volunteer contributors not just for completely new articles or major additions to old articles, but also to reorganize, add references, check spelling and formatting, of existing articles.

My aim is for you to contribute a significant but limited (about 9 hours of work, I estimate) improvement to Wikipedia. Your work breaks down into three parts, which are due at different points during the semester.

Part I: get registered and look around ≈ 2 hour

To be part of Wikipedia, you'll need to register as a contributor, look over some of the small projects needing work under **Help Out** in the Community Portal, and propose a few you'd like to work on. You should consider areas that you are somewhat familiar with, but there's no need to be an expert.

Your proposal must be mailed from your University of Toronto address to

`csc104f12wikipedia-1@cs.toronto.edu`

. . . and the subject line consists of your tutorial section and your Wikipedia userid, for example:

`Section 1: Ernesthemmingway`

The body of your email should include links to the Wikipedia pages for articles you might want to work on.

Your email must be received by 11:59 p.m., September 21st.

Part II: preparing a plan ≈ 3 hours

Using the feedback from part I you'll be able to select a work-needing project from the **Help out** section of Wikipedia English's Community Portal. Before actually changing Wikipedia, you'll need to learn about the culture and practices of the Wikipedia community.

Each of the sections needing help under the Community Portal's Help out section has a link called **Learn how**. You need to consult this to find out about Wikipedia conventions for formatting, spelling, and grammar, as well as more general principles that go by acronyms such as NOR, NPOV, or even V. If you

aim to consult, and quote, other sources, that should also be part of your plan. It's often good to consult the Wikipedia community, so your plan may involve consulting the talk page for your chosen project.

Just as in the first part, your plan has to be written down and emailed from your University of Toronto address to

csc104f12wikipedia-2@cs.toronto.edu

...and the subject line consists of your tutorial section and your Wikipedia userid, for example:

Section 1: Virginiawoolf

. The body of your email should consist of a description of your plan for contributing to one of the projects listed under **Help out**, and it should make clear what you've learned about Wikipedia practices in reading one or more **Learn more** links.

Your email must be received by 11:59 p.m. on October 19th.

Part III: making change ≈ 4 hours

Using the evaluation from Part II you should be ready to make some modest, but useful change to Wikipedia. You may have already created a sandbox example, i.e. a proof-of-concept that doesn't actually change Wikipedia. It's a good idea to consult other Wikipedians that are interested in the project, and let them know your plans. This may involve modifying your plan slightly, but that's the spirit of Wikipedia.

Please note that we don't grade you based on the reaction of the Wikipedia community. It is possible that you carry out an excellent plan, but your work is deleted by some member of the Wikipedia community. You will be graded based on the merits of your work, which we will judge based on the log files of any pages you change (we can look back and compare old versions, just as with any Wikipedia page).

For your last email, all we care about is the subject line announcing that you're done. As before, it must be mailed from your University of Toronto email address to

csc104f12wikipedia-3@cs.toronto.edu

...and contain your Wikipedia userid and tutorial section information, for example:

Section 1: Bertholtbrecht

The body doesn't have to say anything. We'll check out the work done by that userid, and evaluate that.

Your email must be received by 11:59 p.m. November 23rd.

Writing Centre

If you'd like advice on writing, the University provides Writing Centre help for our students. You should seek out their advice in this, any any other course where it's needed.